Non-Communicable Disease Management in Low Resource Settings during the Pandemic

Presented by Anselm Hennis MD, MSc, PhD, FRCP, FACP and Silvana Luciani M.H.Sc., Department of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, PAHO (Pan American Health Organization)

Summary Sheet by Danielle Amundsen, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Summary/Key Points:

• Where we are now
  o In the Americas, 81% of all deaths are due to NCDs
  o Even prior to COVID-19, NCDs pose major challenges to healthcare systems with inadequate coordination between public and private systems and hospital-centric systems
  o The epicenter of the pandemic is shifting to the Americas
  o NCDs such as hypertension, diabetes, cancer, chronic kidney disease, and chronic respiratory diseases lead to a higher risk of becoming severely ill with COVID-19

• COVID-19 poses many challenges to NCD management, screening, and data collection
  o Stay at home orders leading to increased NCD risks: poor diets, less physical activity, increased smoking and drinking alcohol
  o Disruption in provision of healthcare services including closures
  o Fear of attending care facilities leading to reduced elective clinic visits and delays in high priority treatments for patients with NCDs
  o NCD staff have frequently been partially or fully reassigned to the COVID-19 response
  o Public screening programs for NCDs have been postponed
  o NCD data collection including surveys has been postponed in many countries

• What is needed
  o Prevention and management of NCDs must be part of national responses to COVID-19
  o Timely access to healthcare and essential medicines for NCDs
- Provide increased medication supplies (ex: 3 mo refills instead of 1 mo)
- Medication delivery
- Telemedicine, virtual consultations, and other strategies when possible
  - Maintain and strengthen policies to control risk factors (ex: tobacco control policies)
  - Surveillance systems must include data collection on NCDs and NCD-related comorbidities in COVID-19 patients
- **PAHO’s Response**
  - Monitoring effects of COVID-19 on NCDs and Mental Health
  - Technical guidance and webinars on maintaining NCD services during the pandemic
  - Support policies to reduce smoking, alcohol, and unhealthy diets
  - Communication materials and social medial messages to raise awareness among people living with NCDs, health workers, and the public

**Online resources:**

PAHO: NCDs and Covid19 Resources [In English](https://example.com) – [En Español](https://example.com)
PAHO: Mental Health and Covid19 Resources [In English](https://example.com) – [En Español](https://example.com)
PAHO: Virtual Course on Fundamentals of Palliative Care (5 hrs) [In English](https://example.com)